Foster Parent Connections - August 20, 2024

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August 20, 2024 Vol 4, Issue 8

Announcements

Great news! The Missouri Department of Social Services has received approval for the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer Program, known as “Missouri SuN Bucks.”

What is Missouri SuN Bucks?

This new program will help families buy food for their school-aged children during the summer months when school is not in session. Foster children ages 7 through 17 are automatically eligible for this benefit – **there is no need to apply.** Children in foster care will get a one-time $120 benefit that can be used to buy nutritious foods at authorized locations.

For more information and FAQs regarding this benefit program, visit the Missouri SuN Bucks webpage.

The Call to Foster Podcast

The Call to Foster Podcast: S2E8

"Every kid needs a family history."

This month, Shasta, Jessica, and Ashton sit down with Deborah Stukey. Deborah is a retired school teacher and principal and is a resourceful learner. Her natural educating talents, as well as the training she received as an educator and to become a foster parent, has been extremely valuable in her foster parenting journey. Deborah has an adopted son with significant medical challenges and has learned a lot about how to take care of children with high medical needs while learning to care for him! She encourages all foster parents and potential foster parents to not shy away from caring for kids with high medical need - the learning curve is not too sharp and she says it is worth it! Most of all, she encourages all foster parents to never stop asking questions, even the hard ones.

If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a foster parent, learn how to get started on our website: https://dss.mo.gov/cd/foster-care/becoming-a-foster-parent.htm

Please subscribe to and share this podcast with anyone you know who might be considering fostering! You can listen to the podcast on most popular podcast platforms.

Success Story

Below is a success story that we wanted to share. The names have been changed for privacy.

Teresa was always interested in becoming a foster parent, after watching her mother, aunt and uncle foster children for years. Currently raising her 7-year-old grandson, Christopher, she wanted to help other children impacted by foster care. She participated in STARS training, completed her home study and was licensed earlier this year.

The day she was licensed, two children placed in her home for emergency placement. The week after they left, she received a call about caring for 13-year-old Elijah. He came to her home with a lot of behavioral issues caused by trying to cope with years of trauma. He wasn't in school for the first two weeks of living with Teresa. He was struggling and Teresa didn't have the experience to be able to help him. She reached out, saying she didn't want to give up on this child, but she wasn't sure what to do.

We enrolled Teresa in the Level A training, so she could learn the tools and techniques needed to help Elijah regulate and thrive. We also referred Teresa to the Educational Advocacy program to assist with the school issues.

Since living with Teresa, Elijah has made a complete turnaround. He is excelling in school, takes better care of himself, and wants to be more involved in extra-curricular activities such as playing the saxophone in his school band.

Recently, Elijah was told that his case plan was changing from reunification; he could decide whether he wanted the plan to be guardianship or adoption. Elijah went to Teresa and told her he wanted to be adopted by her, asking if she would like to adopt him. Teresa made sure he understood what adoption meant, and he said that he did. Elijah said that no one has ever supported him and been there for him like her.

Elijah's next court hearing is next month. He wants to attend so he can let the judge know that he wants to be adopted by Teresa. Soon he will be able to have the permanency he deserves.

Show Me Healthy Kids

When a child goes into foster care, Show Me Healthy Kids (SMHK) managed by Home State Health is here to help. First, we check the child's health needs. If the child has been in foster care, they might already have someone who helps with their health needs. To find out who is helping your child, you can email HSH_Anchors@homestatehealth.com or call SMHK at 1-877-236-1020, ext. 6075125 (TTY/TDD 711). SMHK can also give you more support and resources for taking care of the child. If SMHK contacts you soon after the child is placed, we hope we can work together to meet the child's health needs and care, *including mental/behavioral health and wellness exams.*

For more information about SMHK, like Care Management and extra health benefits, you can look at our website or call SMHK at 1-877-236-1020, ext. 6075125 (TTY/TDD 711).

Reasonable and Prudent Parenting from the Center for States Newsletter

Child welfare agencies are responsible for promoting the healthy development and well-being of children and young people in their care. To achieve healthy development, children and young people in foster care need to be involved in normal and developmentally appropriate extracurricular and social experiences, commonly referred to as normalcy.

- **"Normalcy"** refers to allowing young people in out-of-home care to experience childhood and adolescence in ways similar to their peers who are not in foster care. This includes participating in various social and cultural activities such as after-school clubs, sports, community events, school field trips, sleepovers, social media; getting a job; taking driver's education courses; attending dances; going to movies with friends; and more.
- **"Reasonable and prudent parent standard"** is a term used in federal and state legislation that refers to practical decision-making of foster parents and other caregivers in allowing children and young people in foster care to participate in healthy and developmentally appropriate activities. The term "normalcy" is often used to reflect the legislative intent of implementing a reasonable and prudent parent standard.[1]

Young people are better able to achieve normalcy when child welfare agencies engage them in regular permanency planning, listen to their needs in care and goals for the future, connect them to support services and developmentally appropriate experiences, and help them maintain and establish new long-term relationships.

Trainings & Events

Adoption and Foster Care Events and Training

Looking for training opportunities? Interested in adoption? Know someone who is interested in becoming a foster parent and wants to learn more? Find events online or near you on the new calendar on the Missouri Heart Gallery website.

Hosting an event? Send us an event request!

View the Calendar

Right Time Trainings

You now have access to what is called National Training Development Curriculum (NTDC) Right Time Trainings. There are 15 trainings and they are all 1 hour long. There is a different topic for each training. Some of the examples include Building Children's Resilience, Building Parental Resilience, Family Dynamics, Managing Placement Transitions, Responding to Children in Crisis, and Sexual Trauma. We will highlight each of these trainings in this newsletter.

This month we are highlighting the training called Preparing for Adulthood. This theme provides an overview of the impact transitions, both planned and unplanned, have on children who have experienced trauma, loss or separation. The theme discusses strategies parents can use to make these transitions less traumatic and disruptive. This theme provides an overview of the common skills that youth will need to effectively navigate as an adult and provide strategies on how families who are fostering or adopting can prepare youth to successfully transition into adulthood. The theme highlights the variance that can exist between chronological and developmental age for children who have experienced trauma, separation and loss and how this can impact the transition to adulthood. Some of the challenges that youth may face during this transition are highlighted. You may find these trainings through the Training page for Foster Parents.

The following links will take you to a multitude of training opportunities that are available for in-service hours:

Parent Cafe Training Institute (missouri.edu)

Foster Parent College - Online Training for Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Parents and Caregivers

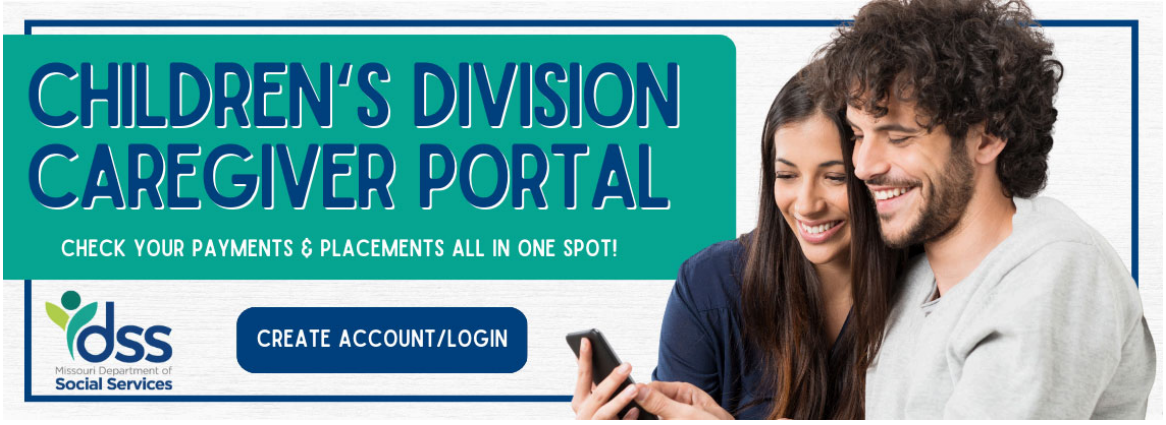
Training | Child Welfare Information Gateway

All Courses - FosterAdopt Connect Training (thinkific.com)

Family Development Training - Central Missouri Foster Care and Adoption Association

Training for Parents | Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition (foster-adopt.org)

Tips & Reminders



Children's Division Caregiver Portal

The Children's Division now has a Children's Division Caregiver Portal for foster, relative, respite, legal guardianship and adoptive families! This portal is the first phase of a multi-year project. This phase allows caregivers to see their demographics, what placements they have, and their financial information. To visit this portal please log into https://my.mo.gov/gsp?id=childrens_division_caregiver_portal.

If you have any trouble, please email FosterCare@dss.mo.gov and we will assist you.

Family Resource Centers

Did you know that there are Family Resource Centers across the state that serve Foster and Adoptive Families? Family Resource Centers (FRCs) are support systems that provide resources, training, peer support, respite, and other services families need to navigate raising children through foster care, adoption, and guardianship. These centers are regional, and you can inquire about services, resources, and how to get started in foster care or adoption through the resource center that services your area via phone, email, and the center's website.

Find a Family Resource Center Near You

Turn In Your Monthly Medical Log and Travel Log

This is a reminder to complete/turn in your Monthly Medical Log and Travel Log to the case manager(s) when you see them every month. You need to complete a Medical Log (CD-265) for every child every month even if they had no medical appointments and/or do not take medication. This form is required to document consent decisions for routine medical care and provide a medical history for the youth each month. If they are in your home only part of the time, please fill one out for the time the child was there. Your cooperation with this is greatly appreciated. The medical and travel log are now available on the I am a Foster Parent web page. **Children's Division | Missouri Department of Social Services (mo.gov)**

Visit the "I am a Foster Parent" Webpage

This is a web page just for Foster Parents to use to find forms, trainings, and general tools about being a Foster Parent. The Resource Parent Handbook is located on that page as well and can answer many questions. Visit the link above and take a look around. If you know of anyone who

would like to sign up for this newsletter ask them to visit the page as well. There will be a pop up asking for their email address if they want to stay informed.

Did you know that the Children's Division has a Foster Care Ambassador program?

Foster Care Ambassadors have valuable insight and/or experience into foster care and are passionate and willing to help recruit, support, and advocate for the cause. They have thorough knowledge of Children's Division policies as well as the state statutes and are able to answer questions from potential foster parents or interested individuals in the community. Foster Care Ambassadors are available to speak at or host their own recruitment events. Foster Care Ambassadors also serve as mentors to new or struggling foster parents. Foster Care Ambassadors meet virtually monthly to network, share ideas and receive updates from the Children's Division. They are asked for input into new and upcoming initiatives and attend conferences sharing about the Ambassador program. Ambassadors also work on projects such as designing and creating Welcome Packets for new Foster Parents. If you are interested in becoming a Foster Care Ambassador, please email FosterCare@dss.mo.gov.

Foster Parent Identification Cards

All Foster Parents should have a Foster Parent ID card. This is provided to you after you are licensed. If you do not have an ID card please email FosterCare@dss.mo.gov and we will get you the application.

We want to hear from you! If there is information you would like covered in the next Foster Parent Connections Newsletters email, Melissa.J.Selsor@dss.mo.gov.

Our Mission: Empower Missourians to live safe, healthy, and productive lives.

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